

The Elementary English Review

VOL. XVI

MARCH 1939

No. 3

SPECIAL NUMBER

LANGUAGE and COMPOSITION

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FEATURE ARTICLES

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THE ELEMENTARY ENGLISH REVIEW

C. C. CERTAIN, *Editor*

Detroit, Michigan

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Published
1938
January, February, March
April, May, October
November, December

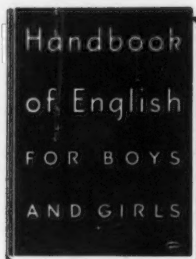
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THE ELEMENTARY ENGLISH REVIEW is published monthly from October to May at Detroit, Michigan. Subscription price \$2.50 per year; single copies 40 cents. Orders for less than a year's subscription will be charged at the single-copy rate. Postage is prepaid on all orders from the United States, Mexico, Cuba, Porto Rico, Panama Canal Zone, Republic of Panama, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru, Uruguay, Hawaiian Islands, Philippine Islands, Guam, Samoan Islands, Virgin Islands and Spain. Postage is charged extra for Canada and for all other countries in the Postal Union as follows: 24 cents on annual subscriptions (total \$2.74), on single copies 8 cents (total 48 cents). Patrons are requested to make all remittances payable to THE ELEMENTARY ENGLISH REVIEW in postal or express money orders or bank drafts. Claims for missing numbers should be made within the month following the regular month of publication. The publishers expect to supply missing numbers free only when losses have been sustained in transit and when the reserve stock will permit. All communications should be addressed to THE ELEMENTARY ENGLISH REVIEW, Box 67, North End Station, Detroit, Michigan. Entered at the Post Office at Seymour, Ind., and at Detroit, Michigan, as second class matter.

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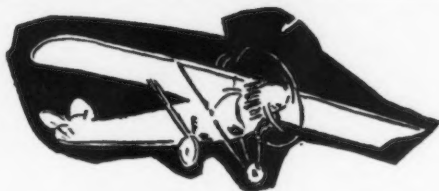
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THE ELEMENTARY ENGLISH REVIEW

VOL. XVI

MARCH 1939

No. 3

This Thing Called Integration

ROY IVAN JOHNSON

*Stephens College
Columbia, Missouri*

A COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT was discussing with the curriculum committee on English the needs of the course of study.

"One thing I want to say to you most emphatically," he announced in earnest tones. "We don't want any of this thing called *integration*. We want the pupil to study grammar and be able to use it in what he writes and speaks every day; we want him to spell the words correctly in every sentence he writes; we want him to read something worth reading and understand what he is reading about."

It is obvious that if the committee gave the superintendent what he wanted, it gave him an "integrated" course of study. By his own prescription he dovetails grammar into everyday composition; he sees spelling in its relation to sentence structure; he sees reading as a means to thinking and understanding and (by implication) an avenue to worthwhile content for expression. To achieve the ends which he envisions, grammar, spelling, word study, composition, reading must be taught in mutually supporting relationships. There must be an "integration" of learning with constant emphasis upon the application of the various English disciplines to each aspect of communication.

But in spite of the basic common sense with which this superintendent analyzed

the English problem, he wanted (or thought he wanted) nothing to do with "this thing called integration." Thus can educational terminology grow into disrepute while the philosophy it connotes remains unchallenged.

It may be interesting to examine some of the reasons which lie behind the skepticism which frequently develops toward a new educational term. First, the hair-splitting definitionist is not content to accept the common and current meanings and implications of a word—the well established dictionary meanings and the connotations derived from general usage. He must give it a special technical "turn" or invest it with esoteric significance or make it a shibboleth to the company of the elect or endow it with invented implications to bend it more fully to the slant of his own thinking. Thus has the good word "integration" suffered in the hands, and on the tongues, of the over-zealous who have sought to refine its meaning by over-definition or who have parroted it like a professional password. Some student of semantics has estimated that more than a hundred different meanings are attached to "integration" as it is used in current educational literature. One can sympathize with the superintendent who wants no more "integration" until it sobers up from its heady fling and ceases to be all things to all people.

Another condition which explains why many good words "fall from grace" in the educational vocabulary is the masquerading of spurious material, in textbooks and courses of study, under the glamorous terms that have gained favor in the more thoughtful minds of the profession. "Functional grammar" has for a number of years been hailed as the answer to the vexing problem of seemingly sterile and futile years of formal instruction in grammar in the elementary grades and high school. Behold the result. The old definitions, the old logical presentations, the old latinized inflections, the old "pure" grammar drills, appear in their accustomed places under the reassuring caption "functional grammar." No wonder the pedagogical eyebrow is lifted occasionally when the talk turns to "functional" subject matter in the curriculum. Likewise integrated courses of study have been offered whose only integrating element was the paper upon which they were printed. The old patterns of isolated subject matter have appeared with no warp and woof of connecting relationships, no interplay of applications, no unity of purpose, no "wholeness" of effect. Sometimes amusing efforts are made to "earmark" a course as an integrated piece of work by the introduction of casual references to geography, mathematics, history, art, or physical education. Such references may constitute a friendly gesture toward correlation, but they provide no help for the teacher who wants an integrated organization of subject matter.

Another explanation of the resistance which is sometimes felt toward the efforts of the curriculum maker to "integrate" pupil experiences in learning is the conviction that integration is a process that accompanies the mental development of the pupil and not a function or quality of instruction itself. From one point of

view this theory is sound. One of the important end results of education should be the development of an effective personality; and the first essential of effective personality is an integrated self. The successful learner makes his own "connections" and blends experience into unified patterns of meaning and significance. But to limit integration to this natural psychological function which accompanies intellectual maturity is to place arbitrary and unjustified restrictions upon the common and accepted meaning of the word. There is nothing obscure or technical in the dictionary definition, "to unite parts or elements, so as to form a whole." Scattered bits of subject matter can be so related as to form a teachable "whole." The subjective integration which the intelligent learner achieves for himself can be aided by an integration of subject matter which emphasizes the interrelationships and interdependencies of parts or elements.

No group of teachers has greater reason to be vitally interested in the principle of integration, as it applies to the problems of instruction, than English teachers. They are dealing primarily with ideas and the relationship of ideas. The skill of clear, accurate, and effective expression which they hope to cultivate in their pupils is a composite of many skills, all of which may be called for in a single expressional situation. They are attacked on all sides with the allegation that "pure" grammar has failed to function because it has been divorced from practice in the process of instruction. The English course, we are told, lacks "content" because emphasis has been placed on the forms of expression at the expense of the substance of expression. Wherever the English course continues to be a series of isolated lessons in spelling, in writing, in speaking, in reading, in grammar, a basis of truth exists for

these charges. Wherever the English disciplines are merged, "integrated" if you will, under the common objective of improved communication, and motivated by interesting and significant subject matter of experience, the charges are easily dissipated.

The sentence itself, which is the basic unit of expression with which English teachers are concerned, is an integrated product. To create a good sentence requires a knowledge of word meanings, ability to spell (or pronounce), skill in writing (or speaking), the correct use of word forms, the recognition of thought relationships. The production of a paragraph or a whole composition requires the same combination of abilities in greater measure and with greater emphasis upon the relationship of ideas. To subsume these abilities under one general objective of effective communication is to make English one subject instead of many.

The inseparability of content and form in English offers another basis for effective integration. What concepts, what understandings, what experiences may be used as background for training in English skills? The answer to this question will determine the reading selections to be used, the discussion topics to be introduced. And out of this "thought content" will grow the application of specific skills, the study of word meanings in context, drill exercises which will meet specific needs, and occasions for practice which are "functional" because they are real and significant. In other words the "elements" of expressional activity will be constantly united into a "whole."

In the main, recent courses of study in English have recognized the principle of integration and have attempted to weave together the threads of content and form into a unified plan of instruction. The opportunity which has been

most sadly neglected is the opportunity of co-ordinating and interrelating the reading-literature aspects of English with the language-composition aspects. Expression and assimilation are the two halves of communication. Each supplements and complements the other. If the topics selected for reading could dovetail with the topics selected for composition and language study, a double emphasis and double motivation would be secured.

Furthermore, there is a certain psychological reason for relating reading and expression in the process of instruction. Each activity, to be successfully accomplished, calls for active thinking on the part of the pupil. The mental processes involved in each are similar, if not identical. One calls for the recognition of main and supporting ideas; the other calls for the selection and use of main and supporting ideas. In one, the mind follows a thought organization made by the writer, and in the other the mind follows a thought organization which it creates for itself. In both, the imagination is active and alert to the implications of word meanings. A true integration of experience in reading and expression would provide an interacting stimulus which would advance achievement in both fields.

To revert to the county superintendent who provided the clue for the title of this article, we suspect that he is not alone in wanting integration in the course of study but not *knowing* that he wants it. When all is said and done, the goal of education is the molding of experience into meaningful wholes. It is the conversion of miscellany into order, piecemeal into pattern; it is the achievement of perspective through the recognition of relationships. In short, it is "this thing called integration."

Grammar Reconsidered

ALEXANDER BREDE

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IN THE PAST FEW YEARS, in a number of articles, published mainly in *The Atlantic Monthly*, Mr. Wilson Follett has expressed himself at length on the English language; and since the October (1938) number, he has been conducting a section called "The State of the Language," in which he applies his point of view to specific problems. One might take exception to almost every idea he states, for in matters of language he belongs to the eighteenth century and with the brotherhood of the grammarians and rhetoricians who wanted to correct and improve the language and stop it forever from changing. The twentieth century liberal point of view needs to be reiterated, because it shows an understanding of the facts of a language as it is, and not as well-meaning persons, educated but ignorant of the ways of a language, think it ought to be. Mr. Roy Ivan Johnson has already written an admirable reply to one article.¹ In this paper I wish to take up two of Mr. Follett's ideas: that on grammar, and that on the teaching of grammar in the schools.

In "The State of the Language" Mr. Follett has this to say:

So long as English is English its legitimate development (which nobody wants to curtail) is bound to take place within an articulated framework of law and tradition. This framework can be called a set of limitations and a useless interference by anyone minded to hunt up perverse names for it. . . . The point is simply that this framework, always slowly changing in details, is there.²

This is his theory, and it is essentially true. "Framework" is merely a new name

for "grammar." The structure of English is admittedly changing in some details, but it is difficult for some persons to recognize the change while it is in process. A single change in grammar may run the course of several centuries. And how can one really know what the "legitimate" development is as against the illegitimate? The language—vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation—just changes, and eventually the changes are recorded.

But in practice Mr. Follett seems to "want to curtail the legitimate development," for he objects to forms which do not satisfy his notion of the framework, which, though it is "always slowly changing in details, is there." I suppose that Mr. Follett means the framework of English, though I strongly suspect that he may have in mind the notion of universal grammar.

For illustration of the kind of "limitation" he has in mind he gives this:

* a subject plural in sense still clamors for a verb plural in form, and meaning is unsatisfied until it gets it.

The first clause of this is the usual statement in the grammar books. On the whole, it is an inaccurate statement, except for the verb *to be*, where there is a different form for the singular and the plural, in the first person as well as in the third. But the verb *to be* is an anomalous verb and is not wisely taken to illustrate grammatical structure in English. A more accurate statement of fact would be that the English verb, barring a few exceptions, makes no change for number in concord with the number of the subject, *except in the present in-*

¹"The State of the Language Reconsidered," *The Elementary English Review*, March, 1937, pp. 77-80.

²*Atlantic Monthly*, 159 (Jan. 1937) 56; unless otherwise noted the quotations are from this article.

dicative third person singular. There is no change in the past tense, a fact which the rule or the "limitation" overlooks. Any subject, singular or plural, *did* or *travelled*, or *looked*, or anything else. I, we, you, they, and any plural noun *do* or *travel* or *look*; but he, she, it and any singular noun *does* or *travels*, or *looks*. *I* is singular and *we* is plural, but both take the same verb, *do*; *you* may be both singular and plural but takes only one verb form, *do*. Is the form in present day English a singular or a plural form? If plural, then we have a subject singular in sense clamoring for a verb plural in form. The "limitation" ought to state that the normal English verb has a special form only in the third person, present indicative singular. Mr. Follett's "limitation" overlooks the established custom or "tradition" of the language.

But meaning may be clear, whether or not the grammar is satisfied.

Mr. Follett gives us examples like:

We are agreed . . . that the re-election of President Roosevelt and his perseverance in his collectivist policies presents *one of the gravest problems which has ever confronted the free American citizen.*

(The italics are Mr. Follett's.) The problem here may not be a confusion of singular and plural, but a throwing of the antecedent of the relative back to *one* rather than to *problems*, which immediately precedes; consequently, the verb is in the singular. The question we ought to ask is not whether grammar is satisfied but whether the idea is communicated. It seems that the meaning is obvious to all except to Mr. Follett, though I doubt if he fails to understand. "Meaning, the purpose for which language was originally invented"³ is thus satisfied.

Also, may there not be a change in the "details" of the "framework"? In constructions like *one of these problems*

which, *one* may be taken as the antecedent of *which* and governs the verb. Furthermore, since, "as an actuary might put it, the normal expectancy of correctness is nil," and since "the logical-grammatical construction involved is so commonly mishandled in current American speech and print that no one has a right to anticipate anything but mishandling of it," why not admit the fact of this particular change and adjust our framework to include both forms?

The *who*, *whom* difficulty he uses for illustration in "On Doing Without Grammar"⁴ may be a consequence of the failure to recognize the changes the language is undergoing. The placing of *whom* for *who* results from a handbook insistence upon the distinction, so that the average person and even reputable writers become confused and misplace them, because after all few persons are grammarians. Mr. Newton's "As I look around me, slumber seems to have sealed the eyes of those whom I hoped might be my auditors," may be the result of sudden shift of thought while speaking, or it may be just a slip of the tongue. It may, perhaps, be due to an application of the prescription that *who* is improper in the interrogative in such questions as *Who did you see? Who is she married to?* So the feeling develops that *whom* precedes; and then we lean to hyper-correctness and put *whom* where it does not belong. Mr. Newton can call the King James scholars to his defense: "Whom do men say that I am?"

Perhaps the time has now come when we should admit into our "framework" of English the form *who* in the objective case along with the form *whom* in initial positions in questions. Here is only another change in the detail of English grammar. I know only one English

³Mr. Follett quotes this from Lord Dunsany.

⁴*Saturday Review of Literature*, October 30, 1937.

grammar that admits this form without strictures as to its use.⁵

On the matter of the changing grammatical forms, as on changes of meanings in words, any new usages that do not fit old forms Mr. Follett considers as errors. And he is quite sure that "the chances that any given error will become established are too small to vanishing"?⁶ How does he know this? How can we know what the fate of "any given error" will be? We must be omniscient and clairvoyant, indeed! He is quite inconsistent: willing to acknowledge as present standard errors of the past, but denying the possibility of present errors becoming the standard of the future. How did *you*, the plural dative form in Old English, ever succeed in displacing all the other forms of the second person except the plural genitive *your*? There must have been a time when *you* in the singular, and *you* in the nominative were "given errors"; but were their chances of becoming accepted "too small to vanishing"? It does not seem so. And if in Shakespeare's time you spoke "correct" English in the second person singular you were addressing your inferiors politely or your equals in contempt. Sir Toby advises Sir Andrew to "thou" Cesario in his challenge, to show his contempt of his rival for Olivia's hand: "Taunt him with the license of ink: if thou thou'st him some thrice, it shall not be amiss."

Are not *it's me* and *who did you see*, and *he don't* just such "given errors" today? Their chances of becoming established are certainly far from "small to vanishing," and there is as much historical justification for *it's me* as for *it's you*.

⁵Otto Jespersen, *Essentials of English Grammar*, (H. Hoff, N. Y., 1933) pp. 136, 137; cf. George O. Curme, *College English Grammar* (Johnson Publishing Co., Richmond, Va., 1925) pp. 45-6, 48, where the opposite position is taken: "We should withstand the very strong drift here toward the modern forms. . . ."

⁶Wilson Follett, "Words Across the Sea," *Atlantic Monthly*, 161 (March, 1938) 367.

Today *it's me* and *it is I* are striving for the mastery; which will succeed in ousting the other we do not know; a century perhaps will tell. All we can say is that the upper-class traditional form, *it is I*, is beginning to sound somewhat stiff and pedantic and, hence, that many well-educated and intelligent persons avoid it and thus assure themselves of entry into heaven. If Mr. Mencken wishes to use *it's me* and Mr. Follett *it is I*, that is their affair; and they reveal something about themselves over and above the communication itself, which is the same in both forms.

Mr. Follett puts great emphasis upon the teaching of grammar. If we read him aright, by some miracle the mere knowledge of academic grammar is to make all of us speak and write English correctly. But mere academic knowledge of grammar for the average person is more likely to confuse than to help; it merely results in more examples like George Ade's "'Whom are you?' he asked, for he had attended business college." Most of Mr. Follett's premises on this matter are open to criticism as untenable, but I shall select only a few.

The teaching of grammar, he says, has been neglected because "the teacher has been for the most part too enmeshed in grandiose theories of his task." So the teaching of English must "concentrate . . . on simple, precise, concrete facts and principles . . . with plenty of old-fashioned practical attention to blunders which are commonly made"; i.e., to the usages which Mr. Follett or Mr. Ambrose Bierce or the handbook purist calls "blunders." But English teaching has been doing just this, and it has been doing it for much longer than "a school generation." Almost every college student has used a handbook—at least, he has been asked to buy one, new or second-hand — since

Woolley first burst upon us about 1900. And yet there is no "improved general average of public utterance, printed or spoken."

Mr. Follett assumes that the school generation will be one hundred per cent perfect in eliminating "blunders." Out of a class of one hundred, one might get fifteen who have sufficient interest in the manner of speaking and writing to eliminate their "blunders"; most of the other eighty-five would go the accustomed way of their associates. Ask the teachers if they have eliminated *it's me*. The task becomes impossible; and it is impossible because the mass has never been helped by academic grammar. We speak as our parents and our environment speak. Mr. Mencken is not wrong when he writes: "At great pains she [the schoolmarm] teaches her pupils the rules of what she conceives to be correct English, but the moment they get beyond reach of her constabulary ear they revert to the looser and more natural speech-habits of home and work-place."⁷ One can, then, ask Mr. Follett's question, but with a different intonation than his: "To what end, one wonders, all the careful prohibitory teaching?"⁸

The inconsistency into which writers like Mr. Follett are led is illustrated by several passages from Noah Webster. In discussing the "whom do you speak to?" form, which he calls a "corruption," he writes that "all the grammars that can be formed will not extend the use of the phrase beyond the walls of a college." But when he finds fault with the use of the past tense, instead of the present, in the statement of universal truths—"suppose I should say she *was* handsome" (he demands *is*)—he thinks the past tense could have been trained out of our

speech. "Had proper attention been paid to our language, so many palpable mistakes would not have crept into practice, and into the most correct and elegant writings."⁹ The kind of "old-fashioned practical attention to the blunders," which Mr. Webster and Mr. Follett recommend, should succeed in wiping out "suppose I should say she *was* handsome" but never could succeed in establishing "Whom do you speak to?" Will it be more effective in the one case than in the other?

Is grammar really as Mr. Follett defines it, "the indispensable science of saying what one wishes to say?" Grammar defines the "how" rather than the "what." The tenor of Mr. Follett's discussion leads one to add "correctly" to his definition; and then we have the traditional common notion of grammar: a study of how to speak and write English correctly. This is really what Mr. Follett wishes us to emphasize in our teaching. And since we have neglected it, as he says, "the inevitable result is a wholesale production of illiterates with certificates of culture." Hence, to be really cultured, we should all have to study English grammar. Must one really know grammar to be literate? It is doubtful.

This kind of teaching of English is supposed to result in "a new generation equipped to know good English when it sees it." Just what is "good English"? Surely not that which is the result of teaching academic grammar and of weeding out Mr. Follett's or Mr. Bierce's prejudices, on the assumption that they are all errors. That kind of teaching, if at all effective, gets us only school ma'am English—mechanically and grammatically correct but lifeless. When Johnny has trouble with complex sentences, why, he

⁷H. L. Mencken, *The American Language*, 4th ed., A. A. Knopf, N. Y., 1936, p. 417.

⁸"Death of the Sentence," *Atlantic Monthly*, 160 (Oct. 1937) 510.

⁹Noah Webster, *Dissertations on the English Language: with Notes, Historical and Critical*, Isaiah Thomas & Co., Boston, 1789, pp. 270-275, 287.

will avoid them to be free from errors and to reduce the wear and tear of life with Miss Jones; because, incidentally, to quote Walpole, "it is easier to observe laws than to violate them with grace." But in the communication of his ideas and in the naturalness of his utterance he is considerably hampered. No, good English is not English that is "correct," but English which succeeds in communication without misunderstanding and which does not draw attention to itself because of its form or sound.

English teachers are alert to discover the best way to secure good English. Better than the traditional grammatical way is the persistent reading of standard English literature of the past and the present, with the discussion of the ideas involved, and an investigation of unfamiliar words and allusions. Just how the systematic study of grammar is going to improve the student's understanding of the traditional meanings of words, Mr. Follett does not make clear. In addition to association with good literature, we need an association—a *constant* association—with speakers of the English current among the accepted social class. But how is the average American to secure this?

Mr. Follett suggests that we "demand throughout, the mental attitude which despises all vague half knowledge as the most insidious and repulsive form of ignorance." But when we investigate this we find it also has loop-holes. How can we "demand" a mental attitude which is not there and probably never will be? And is our knowledge—half or complete—really dependent on distinctions in vocabulary and grammatical form? "He ain't here" is certainly as exact a bit of knowledge as "He isn't here."

No. The real reason for the present

state of the language Mr. Follett indirectly and inadvertently gives us in his illuminating essay "Are Children Vegetables?" (*The Atlantic*, February, 1938). Our environment, our childhood environment, is all important:

. . . The child's command of speech is assuredly the product of exposure, of opportunity; indeed, what else could it be in a world in which we do not create the words we use, but merely learn them as circumstances bring them our way?

Regarding "the newest child wonder," a child in her third year, he writes that the psychologist's statements that the child is "innately remarkable" and that she "is the product of a well-nigh perfect environment in the home," are contradictory. Her vocabulary of 3800 words and her twelve-word sentences are, Mr. Follett says, "strictly automatic and inevitable" products of such an environment. And he says further:

The mental development of a very young child, so far as it can be measured, is of course a direct function of (a) the kind of persons with whom he associates, (b) the amount of his association with them, and (c) the pains they take to make themselves intelligible and enjoyable to him. That is the simple principle, to our whole civilization an all-important one, to which science and education are persistently shutting their eyes.

Language development is, of course, mental development; and the statement applies to others besides the very young child. All three points are exceedingly important for one's language; in fact, they are all important. One's school training in language has, for the average person, a negligible effect upon his language. One's speech will not change much unless one changes his environment, or unless one is exceptionally interested in the forms of language; and to change requires too conscious an effort for most people. We cannot, thus, in our schools make over the American vernacular or mold it to an arbitrary pattern. Language does not change in that way; at least, not in a democracy. The trouble is that we all, or most of us, were not

An Evaluation of Two Methods of Teaching Written Sentence Structure[†]

JOHN P. MILLIGAN*

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WITHIN THE PRESENT century a great discussion has raged over the matter of teaching grammar. The question at issue seems to be whether grammar shall be taught formally or informally; for no one dares to question its value. In the elementary school this question revolves around the teaching of sentence structure rather than around instruction in the parts of speech. The writer contends that instruction in the use of the sentence is basic to good writing, and that this instruction should begin at the elementary school level. The readers will immediately say: "I grant your premise; but where and how? Above all how!"

To attempt to answer the question of "where" and "how," the writer set up an experiment which was carried out during 1936-37 in ten classes in grades 4, 5 and 6 in two elementary schools: the Watsessing School in Bloomfield, New Jersey; and the Carroll Robbins School in Trenton, New Jersey.¹

[†]This is a brief description of an experiment carried out by the writer in fulfillment of the thesis requirement for the Doctor of Education degree at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N. J. The title of the dissertation is, "The Effect of Precise and of Incidental Teaching of Grammar Upon the Written Sentence Structure of Pupils in the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Grades."

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¹Acknowledge is gratefully made for the assistance rendered by Miss Ruth Struble, Miss Olga Taton, Miss Marie Biggart and Miss Edna Bellis, teachers in the Watsessing School, Bloomfield, N. J. and by Mrs. Jessie Cook, Miss Mary E. Murphy, Miss Anna Pilger, Mrs. Katherine Reisner, Miss Elizabeth Elder and Mrs. Catherine Cramer, teachers in the Carroll Robbins School, Trenton, N. J., whose thoughtful participation made this investigation possible.

In the Watsessing School in Bloomfield, pupils in two fourth and two fifth-grade classes were the subjects. In the Carroll Robbins School in Trenton, pupils in two fourth, two fifth, and two sixth-grade classes were the subjects. Two methods of teaching functional grammar were set up, and teachers were furnished with detailed outlines explaining each method. The precise method consisted of twenty-five lessons organized in logical order. The subject matter of these lessons consisted of items of grammar related to the sentence as a unit which would, if applied, make for sound sentence structure. In the incidental method the teachers had the pupils write compositions and based their teaching of grammar from day to day upon the needs revealed in the compositions. The amount of time (thirty minutes each day) was identical for both methods. After studying by one method, each class rotated to the other method. Half of the classes in each experiment began with the precise method, while the other half began with the incidental method.

The basis of comparison of the two methods was the written sentences of the children. One hundred, two hundred, or three hundred words were taken in proportionate amounts from five different compositions written by each pupil at the beginning of the experiment, five compositions written after the first teaching

period, and five compositions written after the rotated teaching period. This material was analyzed so as to reveal changes following the use of each method in the sentence elements mentioned in the conclusions below.

One hundred and five pupils were subjects in the Bloomfield experiment. One hundred and seventy-one pupils were subjects in the Trenton experiment.

It must be pointed out here that the different class groups varied widely in chronological and mental age and in intelligence as revealed by the Otis Self-Administering Test of Mental Ability, Intermediate Examination Form A. In the conclusions below certain variations among groups are presented in the light of these differences.

Results

Simple Sentences. Pupils use more simple sentences as a result of precise teaching of grammar. The results are influenced by the order in which the two methods are taught.

Complex Sentences. Pupils use more complex sentences as a result of incidental teaching of grammar. Use of complex sentences is increased as a result of precise teaching of grammar but the effect of precise method is not nearly so marked in this respect as is the effect of the incidental method. The order in which the methods are taught has an effect on the use of complex sentences.

Compound Sentences. The use of compound sentences is not affected nearly so much by either method of teaching grammar as is the use of simple and complex sentences.

Run-on Sentences. No conclusion can be reached regarding the effect of either method on the use of run-on sentences.

Incomplete Sentences. A very slight inclination towards the use of fewer in-

complete sentences results from the incidental method of teaching grammar.

Disregard of the Period-Capital Rule. Disregard of the period-capital rule occurred much less frequently after incidental teaching in the Bloomfield experiment. While not so pronounced, the same trend is observable in the Trenton experiment.

Independent Clauses. As a result of precise teaching of grammar, pupils are inclined to use fewer independent clauses, while the incidental teaching of grammar causes pupils to use more independent clauses.

Dependent Clauses. Precise teaching of grammar causes pupils to use more dependent clauses especially if this method is presented first. Incidental teaching of grammar likewise causes more dependent clauses to be used.

Prepositional Phrases. Pupils are inclined to use more prepositional phrases as a result of both methods of teaching grammar. Incidental teaching causes a more pronounced trend in this direction than does precise teaching.

Correct and Incorrect Quotations. Neither of the methods of teaching grammar affects the use of correct and incorrect quotations to any considerable degree.

Age and intelligence modified the results of the two methods in the following ways:

(1) Pupils in classes where the average intelligence is normal or high, change the types of sentences used after both methods to a greater degree than do pupils in classes having an average intelligence below normal. (2) Pupils in classes with low averages of intelligence make a greater variety of sentence errors as a result of both methods than do those pupils in classes with higher average intelligence. (3) In the Trenton experiment, the changes in sentence structure

A Class Project in Letter Writing

HARRY L. TATE

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IN ORDER to stimulate an interest in letter writing the teacher of Technical English and the Principal of the Whitney School decided to arouse a desire among the pupils of the upper grades to correspond with children of about their own ages and grades in other cities of the United States and in foreign countries. The thought was to create a real-life situation in which the involved activities would be something more than routine affairs. The letter writing would then have a setting of genuineness that would not be present if the letters were composed merely as a class exercise, never to be sealed in a stamped envelope and dropped in the corner mail box to be started upon a long long journey to a faraway destination.

As secondary considerations the gathering of a fund of knowledge concerning people, their manners, customs, and social institutions, information about industrial, commercial, and agricultural activities, and a sympathy for and understanding of people in faraway places were factors not to be minimized.

As neither the teacher nor principal had had any experience with a similar project the children were guided into launching upon the undertaking by merely being asked what they thought of the plan. The unusually enthusiastic response left no doubt as to their desires in the matter. Right away they wanted a name for their project and at least a dozen were proposed to be voted upon by the class. "Round The World In An Envelope" was the unanimous choice.

It seemed to possess an imaginative quality that took an immediate and firm hold upon the romantic side of their young minds.

The question of what kind of paper and envelopes to use was settled by having a printer turn out special project stationery. The printing on the envelope read,

'ROUND THE WORLD IN AN ENVELOPE
Whitney Public School
2815 S. Komensky Avenue
Chicago, Illinois

The letter head read:

'ROUND THE WORLD IN AN ENVELOPE
Whitney Public School
Harry L. Tate, Principal

Pupil—
Room—
Grade—

A form letter on Whitney School stationery from the principal to the superintendent of schools of the city in which a correspondent was sought was enclosed in each pupil's letter. It read as follows:

Date

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

DEAR SIR:

The eighth grade children of the Whitney Public School have organized a letter-writing club, the purpose of which is twofold: first, to get first-hand information about other parts of the United States and foreign countries; and second, to develop the correct technique of letter writing through actual correspondence with children of their own age.

We feel that the best way for a child to develop the art of letter-writing is through actual experience in writing. The enclosed letter has been written by a child who is especially interested in your part of the world, and he is eagerly awaiting a reply.

We shall greatly appreciate your co-operation in forwarding this letter to some child who might be interested in corresponding. If at any time we can co-operate with you in any school activity, we shall welcome the opportunity to do so.

Sincerely yours,

(signed) HARRY L. TATE, Principal

In order to try out the plan, a fast group of 8-B's was selected to send out the first letters in a search for correspondents. Their suggestions of what to write about were listed on the blackboard as a general guide. The children were allowed to select the destinations for their letters and a city in practically every state in the United States was chosen.

Then the writing and mailing actually took place. What a thrill everyone experienced! The remarks and questions heard were indicative of the wonderment and expectation that were prevalent among the children. Then followed the waiting for the mail man to bring something to the school. Finally, the first answer came! From Thorsby, Alabama! The class could hardly wait until the recipient could open the envelope and read the contents to a tense group of listeners.

Then more and more answers arrived day by day. But the interest seemed never to wane. Every morning the teacher, like a general delivery, was deluged with inquires for mail. Many children said that the letters received at school were the only ones they had ever received.

After the letters had been taken home for the parents to read they were kept by the teacher. The stamps, especially the ones from foreign countries, were given to the philatelists in the class.

So that the children could constantly have an accurate conception of the progress of the project, a large outline map of the United States was pinned to the blackboard. A red dot was marked at the place to which a letter had been sent, and then circled in blue when a reply came.

The items discussed most often in both the out-going and in-coming mail were: (1) hobbies and amusements; (2) school

affairs; (3) civic interests; (4) family affairs. In addition to the letter, however, the envelopes often contained an exchange of stamps, pressed flowers, picture post cards, snap shots, newspaper clippings, and copies of school newspapers. Parents and teachers were called upon to translate the German, French, and Spanish letters and the Japanese Consul furnished written translations for the ones from his country. The letters from foreign countries which were done in English served as great incentives to the project children, for they were as a rule very well-written both as to penmanship and language despite the fact that the senders had merely studied English as a foreign language in their elementary schools.

No attempt was made to gather numerical data to show that there was an improvement in handwriting or composition, but as a result of seven months' close observation by a highly skilled and interested teacher several points were revealed that, on general reasoning, surely must have had the effect of producing a better pupil performance. Most important of all there was great interest, and it was not merely a flash in the pan. It continued with unabated intensity not only for the duration of the experiment, nor within the confines of the classroom, but beyond. For after entrance into high school numerous requests came from the project children for the letters they had received while at Whitney or for addresses of foreign correspondents. Also, during the experiment quite a few correspondents exchanged home addresses and directed their letters thence. This interference, by the way, lessened decidedly the number of letters that were accounted for as having been received at the school.

Sometimes lists of names of children were included in letters to Whitney children asking that correspondents be found for them.

The slow group of 8-B's, after hearing that the fast group was getting such a thrill out of the project, asked, and were granted permission to conduct one of their own. The 7-A's then wanted to join, but conditions unfortunately made it impossible for them to do so.

Never at any time was there any unwillingness on the part of the pupils to furnish money for the stamps. In fact they were eager to do so.

A summary of the purely epistolary part of the project gives one an idea of the extent and breadth of the work accomplished.

There were 277 letters mailed from Whitney.

Of these 152, or 55%, of the letters were answered.

Altogether, 206 letters were received; often several came for one sent.

The total response amounted to 71%.

TABLE I
RECORD OF CORRESPONDENCE WITH
FOREIGN COUNTRY OR UNITED STATES TERRITORY

Foreign Country or United States Territory	Letters Sent	Replies
Abyssinia	1	0
Alaska	5	2
Brazil	2	0
Canada	2	1
Czechoslovakia	14	10
England	1	0
France	1	0
Germany	3	3
Hawaii	1	0
Japan	11	4
Jugoslavia	1	1
Mexico	14	10
Scotland	1	1
Switzerland	4	3
Syria	1	1
Total	62	36

TABLE II
RECORD OF CORRESPONDENCE WITH
SECTIONS OF THE UNITED STATES

Section	Letters Sent	Replies	Per Cent
<i>West:</i> Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nevada, N. Dakota, N. Mexico, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Washington, Wyoming	137	105	76
<i>South:</i> Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, S. Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia.	34	35	100+
<i>Central:</i> Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin	25	18	72
<i>East:</i> Connecticut, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, N. Jersey, N. York, Pennsylvania, Washington, D. C.	15	6	40
Total	211	164	77.7

Since for the most part the children were allowed to send letters to the states in which they were most interested, it is obvious that the Western States hold the most interest for the children. Next in interest, as revealed by the number of letters sent, are the foreign countries. The Southern States come next, followed by the Central States; then the Eastern States.

If the per cent of total response is used as an index of the interest displayed in the Central States by children of other regions, then the Southern States rank first 100 + % — more received than sent; Western States second with 76%; and other sections as follows: Central (72%); Foreign (58%); Eastern (40%).

The reader may be interested in the following letter written by a seventh grade Whitney girl to a pupil in Czechoslovakia.

2815 S. KOMENSKY AVE.
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS.
January 24, 1936.

DEAR FRIEND,

Our class has organized a club, "Around the World in an Envelope." We write letters to any part of the world we are interested in. Then some child who receives the letter usually writes an answer. Then they keep on writing back and forth. I hope we can be friends like that.

I am a girl twelve years old, 4 ft. and 10 inches in height. I attend the Whitney School and am in high seventh grade. I have three brothers and three dogs. My father is a butcher. My oldest brother Joseph works, but my other brothers attend school. Although my brothers sometimes give me a pain because they tease me, yet I like them better than I would three sisters. My mother takes care of our home and sometimes helps my father in our meat market. She enjoys sewing, crocheting, and knitting. My father's hobby is reading the newspapers. My pastimes are reading books and writing letters. I enjoy many sports such as roller skating, ice skating, dancing, tennis, baseball, volley ball, and swimming. Of course there are other games which I like, but these are the most important ones. I also like to play with marbles and I enjoy climbing trees like the boys do. I enjoy listening to the radio. My favorite movie actors and actresses are Tyrone Power, Sonja Heine, Jane Withers, Alice Fay, Shirley Temple, and Freddie Bartholomew.

Now I will tell you something about our school. It has 900 children attending it. The principal's name is Mr. Tate. We have an auditorium or assembly hall which is on the first floor. Here we have many meetings such as movies, music assemblies, English assemblies, club periods, and other special programs. Our school has three floors besides the basement and altogether we have thirty rooms. Our school class has six different periods. I like all of my teachers and all of my subjects. In our Student Court we try boys and girls who have disobeyed any of the Whitney laws. This is like a regular court with a judge, clerk, bailiffs, defense attorney, prosecuting attorney, and many other assistants and officers. Such cases as fighting are brought before the court. We have witnesses and we question the defendant. If we find him guilty, he is given a penalty. We also have a Student Council which helps to plan things for the school. We have movies every other week, and clubs every other week. We get to choose our own clubs. This year we have sewing, manual art, stamp, sports, harmonica, dramatic, and City Tour. The City Tour Club visits many interesting places in the city such as the Field Museum, Historical Society, dairy, aquarium, Rosenwald Industrial Museum, etc.

Now I will tell you something of my city. The name of it, of course, is Chicago. It is in the state of Illinois. It is a large city with over three million people. We have a few zoos, one of which I have visited many times. It is called the Brookfield Zoo. There are animals of every kind and all are very

interesting. Best of all I like feeding the bears. We have an Art Institute where there are beautiful paintings and statues. There are so many interesting places that I would have to write pages if I included everything, but a few of them are River-view Amusement Park, Stockyards, our big department stores, some of which are 20 floors high. For transportation we have the L which is on tracks about thirty feet above the ground, street cars, street car buses which are double decked.

Since I want to save some writing for the next time, Marion Vranek from the station of C-h-i-c-a-g-o is now signing off. Please be so kind as to answer my letter so we can continue writing.

Your Chicago friend,
MARION VRANEK

P. S. Please write something about your country, yourself, your family, your school, and your friends.

This letter from a Japanese girl was written in English. No changes of any kind were made.

DEAR MISS KASTNER,

Thank you your letter and interesting picture. I am so glad to get another new friend in America. I read your letter and that of from Miss Tomasek again and again with my English dictionary. We have one elder sister and one younger sister and two younger brothers in our family. My elder sister's name Kimiko Imamura and is skillful in oil painting. I am fond of music and English. You said that you are disappointed by not getting answer from Czechoslovakia but you so I should encourage you.

We have dolls festivals as in old on the third of March, which is my birthday. We have friend in the class who is going specialising in tap dancing. Our cherry blossom will soon bloom. It is very beautiful. We leiu in out skirt of beautiful lake, around which there are many many cherry trees. We may be able to send you the picture of the lake and park some day. Are you intimate friend of Miss Evelyn Tomasek?

I like to make you and Miss Tomasek my life long friends. My sister says that she will answer to Miss Novasel.

Please let me hear soon.

Your truly
K. IMAMURA

My address

No 2691 Kichijoji Tokyo Fuka Japan.

Needed Research in Language, Composition, and Grammar

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SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH in language, composition, and grammar is a relatively new thing. It is so new that at times its purposes and possibilities become quite confusing. Its techniques require much improvement that only time, use, and criticism can contribute. Moreover, the whole field of language instruction to which those investigative techniques are applied is changing so rapidly that one can feel little assurance that an investigation, even if begun under the most favorable augury, will not become relatively useless before it can be brought to completion. This handicap has been especially evident with relation to the more time-consuming studies.

Nevertheless, noteworthy progress has been made—progress which has been accelerated to a marked degree in the past few years. The average research study of today is noticeably better than the average study of a decade ago. This improvement is apparent in several respects. Sampling has become more extensive and more carefully distributed. Criteria of acceptable usage are more valid. Control groups employed in experimental studies receive more competent direction. Fewer straw men are set up to be knocked over. Statistical procedures are employed more intelligently. There is evidence of objectivity. Investigators attempt less in a single study, work harder at the job, and interpret the results more conservatively. These signs reflect credit on the men and women who have been guiding the lan-

guage investigations. Working to a large extent independently of one another, they have helped the new science by pursuing assiduously their individual interests.

In spite of these hopeful changes, however, up to now the research in English has not been particularly helpful to the classroom teacher. For the most part it has served only to poke her off her customary perch without indicating where to land. Out of consideration for ruffled feathers and dispositions, if for no other reason, it would seem highly desirable that curriculum leaders take time out to consolidate their gains, if such they be, by the evidence of impartial and thorough research studies.

This article is intended to suggest a few of the directions such research might reasonably take. The limitations imposed by space, and the fact that very useful summaries of research are already available make it inadvisable to refer to the background studies individually. The reader not already familiar with the research in English will find helpful the articles prepared by Greene,¹ Goodykoontz,² and Leonard,³ whose contributions are among the most recent.

¹Greene, Harry A. "Special Methods and Psychology of the Elementary-School Subjects: English Language," *Review of Educational Research*, Vol. 7, pp. 474-81; 554-57. December, 1937.

Also Greene, Harry A. "Principles of Method in Elementary English Composition," *Fifth Annual Research Bulletin of The National Conference on Research in English*; reprinted in *The Elementary English Review*, Vol. 14. March-December, 1937.

²Goodykoontz, Bess. "A Bibliography of Unpublished Studies in Elementary School English, 1934-1936," *Elementary English Review*, Vol. 14. November-December, 1937.

³Leonard, J. Paul. "The Effect of Recent Research Upon the Selection and Placement of Items of Grammar in the Secondary School Curriculum," *Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. 31, pp. 599-607. April, 1938.

Part of the needed research should have to do with specifics of language. As long as much of what is taught in English must be based on the conventions of language, there will be need for studies of capitalization, punctuation, letter forms, usage, and the like, in their specific forms. Research in English had its start in that sort of investigation, but in spite of its having enjoyed priority of attention, only a good start has yet been made.

Error studies as such are no longer in good repute, but studies of the positive aspects of pupil needs and performance, even those based on the proportion-doing-this and the proportion-doing-that type of statistical treatment, are still needed. Particularly useful should be large-scale studies of what specific language items are found to be most useful in the written and oral activities of children and adults. Here the primary effort is directed at isolating and eliminating from the curriculum items having no particular social importance, and strengthening the provision for items found to be most useful. Investigations of this sort, if they are to be reliable, require large samplings and practically presuppose the availability of electrical tabulating equipment for handling the data. Studies of this sort having to do with punctuation and capitalization are now under way.

In spite of their many refinements over the crude error studies of an earlier day, investigations of this sort run into many difficulties. One of them involves the question of cruciality. It has long been argued that the proportion of error present in pupil's expressional products is, in general, inversely proportional to the cruciality felt by the pupils. Obviously there is a point at which a pupil may become over-anxious, thereby making more errors. The exact influence of cruciality,

however, is largely a matter of conjecture. We need studies which, even if they do not measure the degree of cruciality found in a particular situation, will at least indicate the nature of the effects of this factor on pupil performance.

Granting that at present there is no reliable technique of measuring the cruciality in an uncontrolled situation, it appears practical to attempt to create artificially a number of definable levels of cruciality and to measure the quality of pupil performance under each. These levels of cruciality could, in a rough way, be manufactured by applying certain amounts of motivation to the pupils, measures of performance being taken during the time when the motivation was in effect.

For example, it would seem possible to measure the difference in results produced by the following different assignments: (1) asking members of the class to bring in letters of application based on a hypothetical job described by the teacher; (2) offering to make public the name and letter of the pupil producing the best letter of application; (3) offering a prize of greater attractiveness and some intrinsic value for the best letter; (4) having a real job as the bait, with the letters being directed to the prospective employer and mailed by the writers.

Similar studies should throw light on the problem of how pupil performance can be motivated, an area now in need of much research because of widespread curricular changes. The work of Netzer⁴ in evaluating carefully prepared oral language stimuli affords an example of what can be done along this line.

The problem of difficulty is still of paramount importance in language curriculum building. Too long it has been the

⁴Netzer, R. F. "Stimuli for Oral Language: An Evaluation of Certain Materials," *Elementary English Review*, Vol. 15, pp. 91-94. March, 1938.

practice in some quarters to use the average proportion of pupil error on an item as its index of difficulty. Although such a concept of difficulty may be useful in test construction, it is far from satisfactory as a basis for placement of curricular content. Difficulty should be redefined so as to take into consideration the work, time, and attention required by the learner in mastering the item to be learned. That which is demonstrably worth learning, in terms of its social utility for the majority of persons, must needs be learned in some order. The order should take cognizance of psychological considerations such as those mentioned above. As yet we have practically no studies of this type.

Perhaps one reason for the dearth of investigations which contribute to our knowledge of the order in which things should be taught is the fact that the whole question of grade placement in language has proved a baffling problem. The error studies and the testing programs alike have shown that overlap of ability from grade to grade is almost one hundred per cent, while the range of ability within any given grade is enormous. In language skills there are no distinct grade levels of ability. The continued effort to grade-place materials, in the light of such evidence, is rather obviously futile. If there are hierarchies of difficulty in the language skills to be mastered—and the writer believes there are—the research of the next few years ought, so far as placement is concerned, to be concentrated on techniques for placing pupils, rather than on content. The present situation in language instruction is extremely wasteful of the time of the more able pupils, and at the same time demands the impossible from pupils at the bottom of the ability scale.

There is constant talk of grammar

everywhere these days. Book salesmen tell the writer that some of the newer language texts are giving more space to the formalities than has been customary in recent years. They offer the "pendulum swing" explanation for what they say is occurring. On the other hand, there can be found in some quarters a growing insistence on avoidance of the formalities, particularly the kind of emphasis of them which deprived so many language classes in the past of all semblance of spontaneity, creativeness, and interest.

Regarding formal grammar it is quite correct to say that to date the research has failed to demonstrate the validity of claims made by the formalists. It would be quite incorrect to say that whole matter has been given sufficient investigation. In fact, many of the curricular innovations of recent years are based not so much upon what research has demonstrated as upon what it has so far not demonstrated and what is only surmised. The major premises involved in such decisions should not too long go untested, lest practice become standardized on false conclusions.

We find the term "functional grammar" used a great deal, but the manner of its use suggests that the usual practice is simply to label as "formal" what one doesn't like and as "functional" what one does like. Investigations should be made to discover what, if any, knowledge of grammar is functional and indispensable in the language activities of the school child.

On the other hand, some teachers, convinced of the value of diagramming and other logical and analytical techniques of language study, continue to practice them defiantly or furtively, depending on their personalities and the situations in which they teach. In their defense it

must be said that diagramming, whether regarded as an aid to expression or as a stimulus to improve thought processes, has been given scant attention by research workers. The study of grammar itself is said by some writers to contribute when properly taught, to the quality of mental processes. Such a claim, of course, smacks of formal discipline and faculty psychology. But it is made with sufficient frequency to warrant investigation under conditions favorable to the discovery of possible contributions hitherto overlooked.

Perhaps the implication of the evidence of a great range in ability in almost any class of public school pupils is that research in language ought to stop expressing its results merely in terms of medium and mean performance and become more concerned with describing in detail what happens to pupils of each particular level of ability. Various practices which fail to alter median performance may yet be found to make important contributions at certain levels.

By this time we are all accustomed to living with the terms "fusion," "correlation," and "integration." Whether we have done anything about them is another matter, a matter partly of wondering exactly how to go about "fusing, correlating, and integrating." For the average teacher these terms may stand for anything from soup to nuts. It is all very confusing. Research workers in English can perform meritorious service by producing complete and detailed descriptions of how good teachers and school systems succeed in correlating and integrating lan-

guage in the curriculum. Where carefully worked out programs are reported with scientific precision, the results are of great help to teachers and supervisors. The work of Miss Gillett,⁶ in carrying through to completion and reporting in detail a correlated program of composition and social studies, is a good example of what is needed. It is research of this type which can contribute most usefully to the classroom teacher these days.

One level in school organization, that of the primary grades, represents a wide-open field for language research. Moreover, the availability of equipment for recording oral language, the shifts in content and method which have brought oral language activities into prominence, and the attitude of curriculum workers are all especially favorable for intensive work now in this area. We need genetic studies in language development, a very few of which have been made by investigators not trained primarily for language research. We need evidence regarding the relation between language activities and reading success. Whether such devices as the Metronoscope contribute to skills other than reading is a pertinent research problem for the language worker.

Other needed research, some of it probably more important than many of the items mentioned, will surely come to the mind of a reader interested in seeing a wholesome amount of scientific method applied to the total field of language instruction. This article will have served its function if it stimulates additional thinking along such lines.

⁶Gillett, Norma. "A Correlated Curriculum in Composition and the Social Studies." *Elementary English Review*, Vol. 14, pp. 80-86. March, 1937.

Tell-Tale Verbs

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THE USE WHICH a speaker makes of the verb-forms in English shows as clearly as anything else the degree of mastery which he has over the language. Our nouns are simple and easily disposed of; they require no inflection except for the plural and the possessive, and this adding of the *s* becomes instinctive as soon as a child begins to talk. Adjectives cause no difficulty, as a rule, aside from the tendency of illiterate or very slovenly speakers to make them do duty as adverbs, this error being on so elementary a level that one must be ignorant indeed not to be aware of what is wrong with it. Mistakes occur often enough, surely, in the handling of pronouns, and there is perhaps no misuse of words more crude in its effect, but the possibilities are limited by the small number of pronouns that we have. Only the verbs, it seems, have sufficient range of variation to afford a complete test of accuracy in grammar. The correct employment of other parts of speech is by no means lacking in importance, but the person who finds no difficulty in the proper handling of the relatively complicated verb-system is not likely to be troubled by other details of expression.

With due allowance for exceptional individuals, one may classify people rather definitely as to their mentality and cultural background according to their proficiency in manipulating common verbs. Often a single word will speak volumes as to the sort of environment in which a person has grown up. A criterion which readily suggests itself is the verb *to be*. It has the reputation of being irregular

in all languages, even in those (such as Turkish) in which irregular verbs are very rare. We can hardly find another verb in English which is equally varied in its conjugation. At the same time it is a verb which everyone must employ extremely often; surely it would seem to be the verb which one has least excuse for not knowing perfectly.

On the lowest level, we may suppose, should be placed those for whom the verb has only one form. Here we have the infantile state of mind which furnishes such locutions as "I is", "you is", "we is", or "they is". Though it is usually the third person which is thus made to serve for all cases, sometimes the first person is so used, as "It sure *am*." We are concerned, of course, only with habitual or unstudied usage, not with any deliberate perversions intended to be humorous.

The next stage in ascending order is attained by those who manage to distinguish the three persons well enough in the present tense, but have only one form for the past; they are the people to whom it seems as natural to say "you was" or "we was" as to say "I was" or "he was". Considerably higher in the scale, we find a large class of speakers who regularly observe all the proper distinctions in both present and past tenses, but who, when they come to the future, are as narrowly limited as the rest. The difference between simple futurity and volition or determination, between "I shall" and "I *will*" or between "he will" and "he *shall*," appears to have no meaning for them; they use *will* indiscrimi-

nately in all references to the future, and have nothing but the tone of voice to show which is meant. Closely associated with this error is the confusion of forms in expressing the conditional; the person who employs *will* for everything in future time is no less prone to make *would* do duty for all conditional statements. He does not say "I should think so," or "We should like to do it," but uses *would* with *I* or *we* just the same as with all other pronouns. He is not disturbed by the construction of "I would like", which is absurd from the point of view of logical grammar, since, if taken literally, it means "I should like to like."

Besides the more elementary direct combinations of ideas, capable of being expressed by the simple tenses, there are many situations which make it necessary to mark off different times, unequally distant from the present, and to show their relationship to each other. The sentence, "He *had been* ready before he was called," is not exactly the same thing as saying, "He was ready before he was called." Those who naturally use the compound tenses with precision thereby give evidence of a more advanced type of thinking than is done by people who are content to ignore the relative degrees of past or future time thus conveniently indicated. As a further test for membership in the higher categories of users of the verb *to be*, we might notice whether a person employs the subjunctive to register the shades of meaning which call for it. A very simple example of this sort is the implying of a condition contrary to fact, as in the clause, "If I *were* king."

No doubt a complete classification on this basis would have to take account of subdivisions in all these groups. For instance, to return to the lower degrees in our theoretical scale, we should have to

dispose of the class of people who handle the present tense correctly in the positive but not in the negative. Though they hold to the standard with respect to *I am*, *you are*, and *he is*, they unhesitatingly replace every negative form—*am not*, *is not*, or *are not*—by *ain't*, which can hardly have any grammatical sense other-wise than as a contraction of *am not*.

This colloquial or illiterate *ain't* is a somewhat curious anomaly. Occasionally it is defended with apparent seriousness by real or supposed authorities who deplore the fact that *ain't* is stigmatized as incorrect, and urge that it should be accepted as good usage. The argument in its favor is that the language has need of such a contraction, at least for conversational purposes. Since *isn't* and *aren't* are allowed to pass unchallenged in any informal context, why should we not similarly contract *am not*? One or two points seem to be overlooked, however, by those who contend that *ain't* should be accorded full recognition. In the first place, it is evidently not so necessary as *isn't* or *aren't*, because custom has long since established another contraction for the first person. Elisions have shifted in the course of time; *it is*, which was commonly clipped to *'tis* two centuries ago, is now replaced colloquially by *it's*; in contracting *am not*, we now remove the first vowel instead of the second, and say *I'm not*, which is surely as convenient a form as *you aren't* or *it isn't*.

But the contenders in behalf of *ain't* usually rest their case upon the alleged need for it in negative questions, and deride *am not I?* as pedantically artificial. The latter form is indeed undeniably stilted, but the answer is, of course, that no one needs to use it, *am I not?* being much more natural. A further consideration which apparently is not observed in these discussions is the fact that circum-

stances do not often require a person to ask a negative question about himself; we usually know (or think we know) about ourselves, or else the question takes the simpler positive form *am I?* The negative interrogation in the first person singular is likely to be purely rhetorical, and therefore *am I not?* sufficiently dignified in tone, naturally fulfils the requirement. Anyone who feels a constant need for expressing the idea represented by *ain't I?* is almost certainly giving himself too large a place in his conversation.

At all events, *ain't* has for a long time been a characteristic item in the speech of the class of people who show the least discrimination, the least care for any kind of propriety, in their use of English.¹ It has become perhaps the most typical instance of bad grammar, and that is why the sporadic attempts to defend it are sure of attracting attention. Whatever one may think *ought* logically to have been the historical development of its usage, it has come to be inevitably associated with the company it has kept; the really artificial and pedantic gesture is not that of adhering to the form now thoroughly settled as correct, but rather that of trying to falsify the modern history of *ain't*, and of pretending that it does not have the flavor of crudity which it so flagrantly has.

Those for whom *ain't* is the only negative form of *to be* in the present tense will be practically certain to treat the verb *to do* in a similar manner; though accustomed to distinguishing *he does* or *it does* from *they do*, they will employ *don't* indiscriminately with all pronouns, and thus produce such distortions as *he don't*. Errors like these are significant not merely because their own incorrectness betrays lack of discipline in the very

¹See discussion in *The Lexicographer's Easy Chair*, *Literary Digest* for Feb. 3, 1934, which gives a number of references to its use in fiction by various authors, including Dickens, who put the word "into the mouths of illiterate persons."

rudiments of grammar, but also because they are so regularly accompanied by all manner of other crudities. Most people who habitually say *ain't* in place of *is not* will substitute it quite as freely for *has not* or *have not*; the abuse of either *ain't* or *don't* goes along pretty regularly with the double negative, meaningless employment of the word *got*, and a general poverty of vocabulary. The normal setting for these faulty forms, the kind of context where they appear exactly in their true element is in perfect illiterate sentences like "He ain't got nothin'," or "That don't make no difference." Of course there are people who enjoy the use of such language as a conscious pose.²

The past tense and the perfect participle of various verbs prove stumbling-blocks for many who go along smoothly enough with these verbs while they are in the present. Here again we have to do with mistakes which belong in the same class of diction with the *ain't* and *don't* sentences previously noted. Careless confusion of principal parts results in such monstrosities as "I seen it," "He done it," "They begun the work," "He come here." These typical examples, where the past participle replaces the ordinary past tense, are balanced by others where the forms are shifted in the opposite direction, as in "I have saw," "He has went," "They have wrote," "We have drank." Instead of being exchanged with the perfect participle, the preterit may simply be formed in a wrong way, as *throwed* or *bursted*. It happens also that parts of different verbs are jumbled together; "He would set by the window," and "He laid down to rest," are characteristic specimens.

We should doubtless be unwise to depend upon any single error of grammar,

²Associated Press dispatch from Santa Fe, N. M., January 1, 1934, reported the newly-elected governor as saying that he "ain't going to stop saying ain't." O. O. McIntyre, in "New York Day By Day," July 21, 1936, speaks of the "grammatical fixation" on *ain't* of Bugs Baer and Will Rogers.

of any of the varieties we have been examining, to classify with finality this or that individual who may at times be guilty of it. Mistakes like these do reveal some things quite reliably, but they may fail to tell the whole story in a given case. It is to be observed that they attach themselves to the expression of elementary ideas which belong to the most ignorant and simple-minded people as well as to the most sophisticated. When anyone errs in the handling of common verbs, we may be sure that he acquired bad speech-habits very early in life, and therefore we have an indication as to the level of culture on which his childhood was spent. Habits acquired during the most impressionable period are not easily broken, and sometimes a person will continue to use wrong forms of language even after years of schooling and of association with people who speak correctly. For the higher or more specialized departments of thought with which he becomes acquainted in his later development, he will learn the ways of speaking in which educated people deal with them, but the vestiges of illiteracy may still persist in the commonplaces of everyday conversation, where heedlessness has made its deepest mark.

The use which one makes of the single word *got* might do nearly as well for purposes of classification as one's degree of proficiency in handling the verb *to be*. At the bottom of the ladder should be placed those who substitute *got* for the present tense of *have*, and regularly say "I got it," or "They got it," when their intended meaning is "I have it," or "They have it." A worse example of grammatical depravity would not be easy to find, and the ear which remains absolutely unannoyed by this perversion must surely be well-nigh insensible to any refinement of language. It seems to have

become an instinctive manner of expression, however, for that class of Americans whose English is the worst.

As we proceed a step higher, the situation becomes less clear, for we come next to several varieties of loose usage which stand on about equal footing. These are the ways in which *got* is employed, not instead of another verb, but simply as an illogical addition to a statement which is complete without it. For instance, in the sentence, "I have got to go,"—likely to be spoken with especial emphasis on the very word *got*—there is no discoverable meaning which would not be covered by "I have to go." How natural this way of speaking seems to many people is evident when we see it used in advertising slogans. A full-page advertisement bears in large letters the words, "I've just *got* to stop drinking coffee!"³ Another says, "I've *got* to get some sleep!"⁴ A motion-picture is announced with the advice, "If you don't see another picture all this year, you've *got* to see" this one.⁵ In each case, lest there be any doubt as to the emphasis, the word *got* is printed in italics or in heavy type.

Of course this locution represents some advance above our first category, in which the idea would take the shape of "I *got* to go." (Or "gottuh"!) No doubt this is simply a colloquial corruption of *have got*, the *'ve* of *I've* being dropped out by careless speakers. Perhaps some influence has been exerted by the speech of foreigners whose ears did not catch this elided unstressed form of *have*, and who lacked the sense of English grammatical construction to make them feel its necessity.

Aside from sentences in which, as in these examples, *have to* is used in the

³*Ladies' Home Journal*, March 1933, p. 65.

⁴*Chicago Sunday Tribune*, November 5, 1933.

⁵*Chicago Sunday Tribune*, January 6, 1935.

sense of *must*, the needless *got* is frequently inserted where *have* occurs in its common meaning of possession. The result is often ridiculous if one interprets the words literally. Certainly we have a right to expect that words should bear some significance, and when we are told that a person "has got brains" or "has got red hair" or "has got talent," the logical implication is that he is being alleged to have *obtained* something which one cannot "get." In ordinary circumstances the absurdity of a literal interpretation, and the fact that we are so accustomed to hearing *got* used superfluously, suffice to prevent misunderstanding, but one can find plenty of statements in which the useless *got* causes real ambiguity. To say "I have got a cold" ought to mean "I have caught a cold", but coming from the lips of some people it means simply "I *have* a cold"; in order to decide which is meant, we have to know the person who says it. According to the language-habits of the speaker, the sentence, "she has *got* a fine set of teeth," either implies or does not imply that the lady in question has secured a set of false teeth from the dentist. Though we should be perfectly entitled to suppose that the statement, "I have just *got* a dollar," means "Just now I obtained a dollar," the chances are at least even that it signifies, instead, "I have only a dollar." If the latter translation represents the idea really intended, then the person who made the first statement is evidently not in the habit of expressing his thoughts with precision.

A point worthy of remark concerning this use of the functionless *got* is the fact that, other things being equal, its prevalence varies according to nationality. In America it is abundantly employed, but it marks a degree of negligence in speech, and seems quite out of place in

a dignified context; many Americans who use it regularly in everyday conversation have an instinctive tendency to avoid it in writing. In England, on the other hand, it causes apparently no surprise whatever in the diction of writers who pass for being most discriminating in their choice of words, and who indeed are so as a rule. Listening to the talk of Englishmen, even of the most cultivated class, one is astonished at the extent of their dependence upon "gawt" in connection with *have*; they seem to find it absolutely indispensable. Moreover, they carry it into the past in ways which do not appear at all idiomatic to any American, and go so far as to replace *had* by *had got*: "He wanted to go to London because he'd got an uncle there."⁶ Nor is this merely colloquial; we find it in serious writing which is not attempting to reproduce conversation: "These people *had got* to know the sort of man they'd asked to dinner, and he would teach them."⁷ "If you told him that he *had got* to do so, he would immediately turn nasty and blast you with strange curses."⁸ It appears in "The Walrus and the Carpenter:"

The moon was shining sulkily,
Because she though the sun
Had got no business to be there
After the day was done.

Yet however strongly the British are given to using the verb where it has no meaning, we must admit that they are much less inclined than most Americans to indulge in such atrocious corruptions as "we *got*" for "we *have*."

Aside from all cases of perverted sense, this verb has a strange power of monopoly over the language of many people. The verb *to get* can express any one of a whole collection of meanings which are recognized as legitimate, and which will be found listed in any unabridged diction-

⁶Quoted exactly as heard in conversation in England.

⁷Arnold Bennett, *Imperial Palace*, Doubleday Doran (1930), p. 100.

⁸"Looking at 'Work'," by J. D. Gleeson, in *G. K.'s Weekly*, July 2, 1932, p. 264.

ary. Fundamentally, of course, it represents the idea of obtaining, winning, or gaining possession of whatever it is that one "gets," but it may also signify to receive, to cause to be (in this or that condition), to arrive at a state or condition or place, or to become, besides a number of special or minor denotations, not to mention the practically fixed phrases which it forms with various adverbs, as in *get up*, *get on*, *get out*, *get along*, or *get around*. With all the figurative senses which it is capable of assuming, whether as a transitive or an intransitive verb, it covers a wide range indeed. Thus it is a word peculiarly subject to overuse by people of limited vocabulary. Here the fault is not a matter of bad grammar or corrupted idiom, but simply the tiresome monotony resulting from laziness in the choice of words.

While the verb *to get* has long been and will doubtless remain a very useful

item in our language, the majority of its meanings are comparatively loose and general. We have other terms with which to express more exactly the ideas for which it is commonly made to stand. Too frequent repetition of this or any other single word indicates a kind of mental slavery. The person who enjoys real intellectual freedom can choose at will from the rich storehouse of modern language; he is not obliged to content himself with primitive makeshifts. He selects knowingly the word which neatly fits his thought. In his discriminating choice of *verbs* he will show his mastery of the tongue as unmistakably as in any other detail. Ability to find always the verb to convey exactly the shade of meaning required, with just the right tone and flavor, has been a powerful aid to our best authors in making explanation clear, narration animated, description luminous and beautiful. By their verbs ye shall know them.

TWO METHODS OF TEACHING SENTENCE STRUCTURE

(Continued from page 92)

errors varied more widely at the fourth-grade level than at the fifth and sixth-grade level. (4) The level of intelligence affects the changes in the use of clauses after both methods. The classes with the higher averages of intelligence show more change. (5) The use of other sentence elements is apparently not affected after either method by the age, grade or intelligence level of the pupils.

Conclusions and Implications

The general conclusion to be drawn from this investigation is that the incidental method of teaching is slightly more effective in changing the sentence structure of elementary school children than

the precise method. Since the incidental method is in accord with modern theories of teaching English, teachers should be encouraged to use this method in the elementary school rather than the precise method.

The general implication of this investigation for the teacher of elementary school grammar is clear. To effect changes in the sentence structure of elementary school pupils, it is better to present the desired changes in relation to the writing experiences of the children from day to day, rather than to resort to formal drill apart from the written work of the children.

Sharing Experiences in the Modern School

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SINCE THE CHIEF means for communicating thoughts and feelings to others is language, the thesis might readily be defended that oral and written expression should be given the greatest emphasis in the curriculum, and be recognized as the fundamental area for growth and development. Most persons speak much more frequently than they read, write or use the tools of quantitative relationships, but all too frequently the art of conversation is given only incidental and haphazard attention in the educational program.

The experience program of the modern school provides opportunity for the spontaneous interchange of ideas. Children living together naturally and happily in the informal atmosphere of a democratic classroom are released from the conspiracy of silence which dominated the formal classroom of the past. They have experiences which stimulate conversation; they want to relive their experiences by sharing impressions and feelings with each other. The desire to communicate with others is a basic, human urge and the modern school organizes its program to provide opportunity for growth in power to communicate by means of experiences worth talking about, and by permitting freedom of expression. The modern school values the experiences and observations of children. They are encouraged to express their thoughts in a hospitable climate in which they are released from fear of ridicule or criticism.

The modern teacher recognizes the

conditions which inhibit expression. She takes time to create an atmosphere of friendliness. The children come to sense the teacher's interest. She does not violate the privacy of a shy child. She does not demand immediate response. She arranges situations in which the child wants to express himself. She is skilful in leading the child to respond by her own sincerity and expectancy. She is quick to express her appreciation of the ideas the child has contributed. She treads lightly in her effort to establish correct usage, and recognizes that eager, spontaneous participation in an interesting discussion is of far greater importance than any literary convention. She is interested naturally in how the child expresses himself, and carefully guides him to more acceptable forms of expression, but she is far more interested in the fact that he has something he wants to say and confidence enough in himself to attempt to say it.

The interesting curriculum units of a modern school provide an integrating center for experience. Because they appeal to the child's interest they stimulate the enjoyment and sharing of experience conducive to effective language development. The integrative curriculum units provide for development in power of expression through art, music, industrial arts and science. Naturally, a child released to express himself in many forms grows in power to express himself in planning, discussing and developing enterprises in accordance with his own

purposes. As his contributions to the group are accepted and valued, his power of expression is further released. Natural situations in the classroom impel him to speak freely and naturally.

The language activities are no longer the stilted exercises of a period in the daily schedule. In fact, if language is really functioning in the life of the group of children there is little need for a separate period labeled "language arts." Language permeates the genuine interests and activities of the entire day. The day is full of need for communication and the desire to communicate drives out timidity and hesitancy.

The teacher does not have far to seek for natural situations requiring oral and written expression. The everyday life of the classroom is replete with genuine need for expression. Tom tells about the dog show he visited Saturday; Mary relates to a wide-eyed audience the story of her father's regular trip as an airplane pilot; the library committee chairman reports on new books available on the library table; letters must be written to secure permission to visit the local broadcasting station; notes must be sent to John who is convalescing from a broken leg; the class newspaper must be written and contributions must be prepared for the school newspaper. These and a score of other needs for speaking and writing in the everyday happenings of a happy, interested group of children provide ample practice in effective expression.

Twenty-five eight and nine-year-olds gathered in a sunny classroom one June morning to participate in an adventure in social living. From previous, extensive experience with children of this age, the teacher¹ believed that the colorful culture of the Southwest Indians provided an

area of experience which would create interest in how man has met his basic, human needs in a primitive civilization. Such an experience, she believed, would throw our contemporary, technological civilization into sharp relief for the children and lead them to a deeper understanding of their own culture.

The teacher thought through many possible ways of directing the children to a study of Pueblo Indians. Because of considerations which would not obtain in a regular school situation it seemed desirable to launch the study by creating an environment which would stimulate discussion and by extending the background of the children through the reading of a story of Pueblo Indian Life. *The Land of Little Rain* by Fellows was read to the children and a discussion began around such questions as: Where do these Indians live? Why are they called Pueblo? What kind of houses do they have? How do they dress? What do they eat? In fact, the questions paralleled all the basic needs which the children recognize in their own lives.

The children's experience was enriched later by a description of a trip which the principal had made the previous summer to Taos, Gallup, Zuñi and other places to see the Indian ceremonies; by a motion picture of a Pueblo village; by an exhibit of authentic pottery and musical instruments; by a trip to a museum and by the reading of many Indian stories. As experience was extended, the discussion periods became more exciting. The children forgot themselves in their interest in the Indians. The teacher, a person at once genuinely sympathetic and technically skilful, worked to build an harmonious group in which the ideas of each individual were given courteous consideration. The teacher capitalized on each

¹Based on a Unit on Pueblo Indian Life carried on under the direction of Edna M. Evenson, Teacher in the Demonstration Elementary School of the University of California, Berkeley, Summer Session, 1938.

contribution which showed originality, freshness or vigor. The tactful guidance of the teacher led to a growing awareness of beautiful and interesting speech.

Many lovely bits of prose and poetry were read to the children. Vivid, colorful words were discussed. A consistent program of vocabulary building went on throughout the entire experience.

As the children began to recreate the lives of the Pueblo Indians in their dramatic play, needs began to arise. A Pueblo house in which the Indians could live was soon under construction. Ceremonial costumes were made following the ideas gained from looking at pictures and reading. They were donned with alacrity as soon as the last stitch was taken, and were taken off with such reluctance that Pueblo Indians were gay bits of color in the halls and on the playground.

Pottery was made. Food was prepared. Drums and drumsticks, belts, gourd rattles, Katchina masks, Katchina dolls, and rhythm sticks were made. As their knowledge of the Indians was extended, the play of the children became more complex. Always they were striving to make it more authentic. Books were searched to find answers to debatable questions, and lively discussions followed.

Interpretive dance rhythms were developed showing the planting, cultivating and grinding of the corn. A beautiful dance with an accompanying chant for rain was created. The chant was a group poem set to a real Indian rhythm.

In a few weeks the children grew in power of oral expression. Even the most repressed were soon contributing information according to their interests. The least expressive in the group were able to contribute something about the meaning of the designs on the pottery, how the adobe was made, why the Pueblos used ladders

to enter their homes, why corn was the main food, why the Indians used eagle feathers!

The most serious discussion centered around the choosing of the chief. No Zuñi chieftain was ever chosen with more serious consideration for the welfare of the tribe. A formidable list of indispensable qualities a chief must have was contributed by the children and written on the board by the teacher. When a quiet, self-possessed little boy accepted the honor and responsibility in a few carefully-spoken sentences it was evident the children had chosen with wisdom. The chief of their choice had throughout the weeks impressed upon them a personality of quiet strength. The chief had not talked as much as some of the others, but when he spoke his judgment was excellent; he had volunteered when someone was needed for a difficult bit of construction; he planned carefully and carried out his undertakings to a satisfactory conclusion. The children had recognized qualities of leadership in this democratic classroom, and had chosen him chief.

Although these children were too young to do much actual writing they were experiencing the satisfaction of creation when the teacher wrote what one had said for all to enjoy. Much excellent preparation for later creative writing was made. Only stories and poetry of superior literary quality were read. The teacher realized that we like and appreciate what we know. In group writing the suggestions carefully given by the teacher produced results of astonishing interest, but at the same time the children kept their sense of ownership in the letter or story or poem.

At every step the teacher was helping the children to build rich and colorful vocabularies. The "green twilight of the desert" was the appreciated contribution

of a little girl who had lived for some years on the desert. The "smooth cool clay" accompanied a gesture of great satisfaction as the child found words to describe her sensory pleasure in the moist lump in her hands. These are, of course, only first steps in the creative adventure, but they are steps taken courageously in the genial warmth of sympathy and appreciation.

Each curriculum unit contributes greatly to the child's opportunity to express himself orally. Some of the activities which are common to many different units are outlined in the following list.

1. Free, imaginative play in which the children realistically recreate their experience, such as the life of the Chinese farmer, the work of the postman, the hardships of the pioneers crossing the plains.

2. Participation in group discussion to make plans and to evaluate work.

3. Presentation of radio broadcasts in which original poems and stories are included.

4. Presentation of original plays and puppet shows in simple settings.

5. Spontaneous dramatization of favorite stories.

6. Participation in classroom clubs or school organizations; participation in school assemblies.

7. Telling stories to the class or to other groups of children.

8. Reporting on the birds, flowers, trees or other natural phenomena of the neighborhood.

9. Reporting on trips or excursions.

10. Reporting on current events of worth-while interest.

11. Reporting on books read; reading of selected passages for the enjoyment of the group.

12. Presentation of characterizations of interesting characters in books read.

Many activities that challenge the interest and ability of children to express themselves in written form occur in well-selected curriculum units. A letter is not a burdensome exercise when it is written to the postmaster of the town asking for permission to visit the post office, or to the dairyman to thank him for his courtesy is escorting a group through his dairy. The writing of a play that will really be presented in the auditorium becomes a thrilling enterprise. Some of the activities rich in possibilities for written expression are listed briefly.

1. Writing a day-by-day log of the incidents which occur in the development of the unit.

2. Writing invitations, letters, poems and stories with the class group participating.

3. Writing invitations, letters, poems and stories as individual enterprises.

4. Writing plays.

5. Writing the script for radio broadcasts.

6. Keeping vocabulary lists of expressive words.

7. Writing minutes of class meetings and meetings of school organizations.

8. Writing news items for the school newspaper.

9. Keeping diaries.

10. Preparing scrapbooks for exchange with children in distant schools.

11. Keeping a record of effective words, phrases and sentences found in reading.

12. Writing notices for the bulletin board.

Language Essentials in the Middle Grades

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LANGUAGE, WHICH develops the abilities to understand and to speak and write correctly and effectively, is fast being recognized as one of the most important subjects in the program of American education. Is any training more valuable to the individual than that of developing his latent ability to understand the ideas of others and to express his own thoughts pleasingly, convincingly, and adequately?

The results in teaching language in the past have been unsatisfactory because courses of study have been too general and excuses have been made for poor teaching. The instructional jobs have not been broken into parts and distributed throughout the grades so that each teacher could readily see her particular part of the job in its relationship to the whole, and the suggestions given to teachers have not been definite enough to have much meaning.

For years children in the primary grades have been promoted from grade to grade without sentence sense or any knowledge of the mechanics, as good usage, capitalization, and punctuation. Can you imagine a fourth grade class doing much in reading, or arithmetic without certain facts being learned in the primary grades? In arithmetic each primary grade is held responsible for actually learning certain number combinations. We do not wait until a child enters the fourth grade to teach him that $2+2=4$. Is there any reason for waiting until a child enters the fourth grade to teach

him to talk in sentences and to use *is, are, was, were, saw, seen, did, done*, and some of the simple rules in capitalization and punctuation? Not until each primary grade works on sentence sense and is held responsible for learning certain items will the intermediate grades be able to do their jobs well in oral and written composition.

Now what is your task and my task as teachers of language? Will a child learn very much about language unless he feels it has a value? Our first task is to lead children to feel that language is important because of its value in conveying ideas to others. As soon as children feel that language has a value, the next task is to create within each child a desire to speak and write correctly and effectively. We must provide opportunities for children to participate in all the different types of oral and written expression, and teach the mechanics, through effective vital drills, for the purpose of improving expression. We must also provide an atmosphere and opportunities that will lead children to talk and write about the things they know.

The oral and written composition work should provide opportunities for training in the speaking and writing activities in which people engage, such as carrying on conversations, making introductions, telling stories, using the telephone, making announcements, and giving explanations, and directions; and in written composition, writing letters, reports, reviews, summaries, and outlines.

The sentence, which is the foundation of all good oral and written expression, should be given much attention. Since only direct teaching and constant practice will develop the concept of a sentence, talking and writing in good sentences should begin in the first grade and continue through all the grades. In the first grade the teacher may begin sentence development by asking the children to tell two things about a pet, their mothers, their daddies, their play, their toys, etc. When children have completed the third grade, they should be able to give their experiences in three or four related sentences.

After developing the concept of a sentence, the ability to paragraph correctly is the next most important skill in both oral and written expression. For years the writer expected children to make good compositions without giving them any technique for making a paragraph. From experience it seems that children in the fourth grade have no concept for the word "outline," but do have a concept for the word "pattern," because they have seen their mothers select or use patterns for dresses.

The following procedure has been used successfully in teaching paragraphing. The children decide that they want to know just how a good composition or story is made. Then we state that all oral and written compositions are made out of sentences, and in order to make a story, sentences have to be grouped according to thoughts and several sentences about one thought make a paragraph. Every hand goes up when asked, "How many have seen an airplane?" Then we talk about the parts of an airplane and make a list of them. An airplane has a name, a head, a body, and a tail. After some discussion we decide that it wouldn't be complete if any part of it were miss-

ing. The paragraph, too, must have a name, a head, or beginning, a body, and an ending. Then we read and study some paragraphs that have been written on the blackboard. Any good paragraph can be used. The following one has been used successfully.

MY CANARY

My canary has pretty ways. When he hops about in his cage, he chirps in a friendly way as if he were trying to talk to me. When he sings, he trills with his throat. Every morning when he takes his bath, he splashes water about until it seems like a shower. But he is the most cunning when he is ready to sleep. He puffs himself up like a ball and tucks his head under his wing. He is a very interesting bird.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. What is the title of the paragraph?
2. What is the main thought?
3. Which sentence gives the main thought?
4. What do the sentences in the body of the paragraph tell about the main thought?
5. What does the last sentence do for the paragraph?
6. What is the point to be proved?
7. Is the point made clear?
8. Name all the facts that prove the main point.
9. Do the sentences begin with the same word?

When your mother makes a dress she usually has a pattern, doesn't she? Now you are ready to make a pattern to use for a paragraph. The outline or the pattern for making a paragraph is written on the blackboard.

1. Name of paragraph
2. Beginning (Statement of the main thought)
3. Body (Facts about the main thought)
4. Closing (Summary of main thought)

Following the above outline, the group makes a paragraph and a child writes it on the board. The children usually select a pet for a topic. Then they decide what to use for the main thought. *My dog is helpful*, is a good topic sentence, for children can give many sentences proving that he is helpful. We spend two or three days making paragraphs as a group and keep reviewing the pattern or outline. Soon every child has a good understanding of the parts of a paragraph and is eager to make a paragraph by himself. It doesn't take long for children to realize that to begin a paragraph with "My dog

is white," is absurd for when we say a dog is white there is nothing to prove and nothing to add to it.

This pattern for making a paragraph is used for oral talks as well as for written stories and letters. In the fourth grade, talks and written stories consist of just one paragraph; therefore when children are ready to leave the fourth grade, they know how to write a good paragraph and how to make a good talk.

In the fifth grade, the composition work consists of making two related paragraphs. In addition to what has been taught, we teach that the topic sentence of all paragraphs on a certain subject must show unity in thought and that the topic sentence in the first paragraph must be broad enough to include the topic sentence in the paragraphs that follow. Suppose you wanted to write two paragraphs about a pet and in the first paragraph you wished to describe him and in the second to tell what he can do. For example:

MY DOG

1. My dog is a very beautiful and interesting pet.
2. He does many clever tricks.

We make an outline by writing our topic sentences before we start our compositions.

In the sixth grade the oral and written compositions consist of three or more related paragraphs. Many pupils write five. For years we expected pupils to make good compositions, but did not give them the principles and when they were through they didn't know whether their compositions were good or not, nor why they were good or poor. By this paragraph plan, children can check their own work and know what part is good or bad, and why.

The mechanics, which consist of good usage, capitalization, and punctuation, should be taught through drills that are

vitalized for the purpose of improving oral and written compositions. Dr. McKee aptly illustrates this point with the example of a football coach, who singles out such abilities as blocking, tackling, and falling on the ball, and gives much practice on them. He does this because he believes that such abilities are not effectively learned in the football game itself; but learned in isolation, they are correctly applied in the game. "There is no reason to think that the teaching of language is different," Dr. McKee concludes, "for no program in composition can live by activities alone."¹

I have learned that I can cut the time for drill lessons half by always being careful to teach the *why*. I do not mean to teach a number of rules, but to teach the reason. From experience I'm convinced also that much more learning takes place in a wide-awake oral drill than in filling out a dozen blanks in any written exercise. May I give a concrete example? One day as soon as a class entered my room, I said, "I want to ask you a personal question and I hope you won't mind giving me your answer." Every eye and ear was at attention. "How many of you have ever been mad?" Several hands went up quickly, but Marion's was the highest and as he looked around he said, "I bet many who haven't put up their hands have been just as mad as I have." I said, "Marion, tell us just when you were mad and how you felt." He replied, "Last night I made a kite and it wouldn't fly and then I was so mad, I just kicked it." I asked, "When you felt that way, did you know your name? Did you know where you lived? Could you have told what you had done that day?" Of course, he answered all these questions in the affirmative. Then I asked the class, "How many think

¹McKee, Paul, *Language in the Elementary School*, page 169.

Marion was mad?" There was a disagreement for some thought he was mad, and others knew he wasn't. James explained, "Marion, you were not mad. You were angry. If you had been mad, you wouldn't have had good sense and wouldn't have known where you lived, etc." After everyone understood how to use *angry* and *mad*, I asked, "Why have we taken time to ask Marion so many questions." Marion replied, "So I'll never again say I'm mad as long as I have good sense." The class enjoyed the discussion

and never again did we have to drill on the correct use of the two words.

The teacher who uses the situations, in everyday life, that require expression, and teaches the mechanics so well that children apply them in oral and written expression, is not just teaching language, but is training for citizenship. Through this kind of language training children develop a sensitivity to social and civic obligations and acquire the skills that enable them to participate efficiently in society.

GRAMMAR RECONSIDERED

(Continued from page 90)

careful enough in choosing our parents or grandparents. Perhaps our great-grandchildren, when we Americans are a more homogeneous people, will speak and write more nearly alike; but perhaps even in their time we will still be independent and perverse and our humanity will act to maintain the diversity.

Mr. Follett's two articles were published thirteen months apart. In the first he insists that we have not been teaching

enough grammar to insure good speech and in the second he virtually admits that good speech is not the result of teaching, but the result of our environment. The sooner education opens its eyes, which he says are shut to the importance of our associates in our mental development, the sooner will we put less emphasis upon puristic "correctness" and academic grammar. But will Mr. Follett think we are on the right track?

The Language Arts in Public Schools

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Few readers will be indifferent to Dr. Meriam's views. Discussion is invited. The opinions expressed are the author's, not the editor's.

SHAKESPEARE GAVE to the reading public a comedy, *Much Ado About Nothing*. I am led to the conviction that our school officials have been giving to our pupils a tragedy, *Much Ado About the Language Arts*—in the grades, in high schools, yes even in college. What a cry of disinterest is heard among grade pupils, manifest largely by nonresponse to assignments for word recognition, language forms, script or manuscript writing exercises. What a wail of disgust is expressed by high school students when English assignments include topical analyses, expository and descriptive themes, grammatical constructions. What moans of indignation arise among college students over freshmen daily themes and work in grammar "which you ought to have mastered in the lower schools." Freshman mortality is the measure of this tragedy. Even graduate students are muffling their screams of resentment against foreign language requirements, when a foreign language is not used one whit in the advanced study pursued.

From the pupils in the lowest grades to student candidates for highest degrees this much ado about the language arts is indeed a tragedy.

But not so for pupils and students alone. The whole range of teachers experience trouble. In the grades these

teachers are under the stress of being ever on the lookout for devices and tricks of their trade to arouse apparent interest in their pupils sufficient to induce at least a minimum of satisfactory response. The secondary school teachers, likewise, find themselves under the duress of camouflaging English composition and English grammar under the guise of "social living" or prodding their students by frequent reminders of college entrance requirements. I fear most teachers of freshman English become hard-boiled and falsely assign to themselves high standards of scholarship proportionate to the mortality of their students in this freshman English.

Tragic all the way through! Pupils and students—not all, but the great majority of them—driven to standard accomplishments or to exit gates. Teachers, from the second grade on into college ranks, generally, complain that teachers in grades lower than the one in which they are working, are responsible for the weakness of students at any stage of their advancement. I have often wondered why teachers of freshman English, as well as all other teachers of the language arts, at any stage, do not congratulate themselves if their students exhibit little acquaintance with the language technics usually expected. In such case the teacher is free to give instruction as *she* wishes.

But this tragic situation is not limited to pupils and their teachers; to students and their instructors. Most of the instruction given is guided by the textbook used.

Some texts are prepared by able teachers; some texts are prepared by those who have not made a success in teaching. With the authors of these texts in the language arts a similar tragedy is apparent. Texts, in my opinion, are primarily a commercial product. Their sale must bring royalty to author and profit to publisher. Financial gain to book makers seems to outweigh social uplift to book users. The depth of the tragedy here will be more apparent later.

There is more truth than fiction in the above picture of tragedy. Many will not accept this judgment, but keen observation and searching analyses of school practices convince one that there is suffering throughout the range of our language arts. However, the situation is not such as to call for a pessimistic attitude. One may condemn and yet find cause for optimism. And to this attitude I wish to lead the reader.

What is the cause for the tragedy as claimed above? I am convinced that it is readily found in the "much ado about nothing"—the great stress made by school officials and imposed upon pupils and students over school exercises in the language arts quite subordinate to real life values for these young people.

Take one example from reading in the lower grades. What terrific struggles yet continue in grades one and two—yes and beyond—by both teachers and pupils. These struggles are due to the emphasis upon acquiring certain technics in this language art rather than really enjoying the contents of a story. The emphasis is placed upon learning to read rather than enjoying the contents of the story—though too frequently the story to be read has too little content value, naturally so when the primary objective is that of learning to read. In this connection, examine critically and sympa-

thetically (for children) the *Thirty-sixth Yearbook* of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part I. This is a second report on "The Teaching of Reading." One is impressed with what some educators emphasize as the gravity of the situation in the teaching of reading by teachers and the learning how to read by little pupils. Here is a volume of over 400 pages, following a similar volume twelve years earlier, throughout both of which stress is placed upon the technics of teaching and learning the art of reading. These volumes and the hundreds of references to kindred studies are heavily loaded with lengthy investigations and discussions relating to "reading readiness," "reading aptitude tests," "reading for skill," "remedial reading," "reading disability," "aims of basic instruction in reading," "motivation of reading," and many more such. These educators are earnest in their prolonged emphasis upon the gravity of the learning-to-read process. One of these well-known authors declares: "Learning to read is a difficult and subtle task . . ."

Such theories are generally accepted by teachers and carried over into the classroom. Here teachers and pupils struggle with flash card exercises and word recognition, isolated phrases set apart in frames, "games that teach," activities that motivate, and so on. This struggle by both teacher and pupil is due to the abnormality of the whole situation. For example, a report of the Curriculum Commission of the National Council of Teachers of English (1935) lists eight "primary objectives" in learning to read, some of which are: "to read previously memorized rhymes," "to read blackboard or chart compositions dictated by the class," "to read . . . very simple directions for cutting and pasting . . ." Such objectives and the accompanying reading are

not for normal children. All this is as unreasonable as to ask a fish to swim out of water. The author who declares that learning to read is a difficult and subtle task is one who aligns himself with such unreasonable and abnormal proceedings. I fear he is not intimately acquainted with children and wholesome story books. Here is ample cause for the tragedy in reading as one of the language arts.

Similarly with writing, composition, grammar—through the grades, high school, even freshman year in college and the foreign language for graduate degrees. Writing exercises are empty forms. Composition requires pupils to say something in set forms rather than invites them to give expression to something they wish to say. Grammar is essentially nothing other than affixing names to recognized language uses. From first grade to graduate degree language arts are, in the main, form without function.

But why is this persistent emphasis upon form? I think it may be truthfully asserted that our schools are largely conducted on the basis of custom rather than directed to specifically function in the lives of children and youth. School habit has fostered language forms. True it is that authors do advocate function for these language arts. But one has only to study the *Twenty-fourth and Thirty-sixth Yearbooks*—with the hundreds of articles referred to—to become impressed with the predominance given to the teaching-learning processes: the technics and forms of these language arts. Authors and publishers produce quantities of these forms in textbooks; school authorities adopt these texts for school use; influential educators recommend that each pupil be supplied with a copy of each of all texts assigned to his grade. This is representative of school custom and is an

additional indication of the great formality in our school work and an increase in the tragedy of the situation.

What may be done to make matters much better? The program may be very simple, though insight, sympathy, and courage are necessary. Provide that the language arts—reading, writing, spelling, language, grammar, composition—yes even the foreign language in graduate work—be discontinued *as school subjects*. Remove them from our school schedules. Stop supplying each pupil with a text in each of these "subjects." (This would mean less royalty to authors and less profit to publishers. But schools should be conducted for the benefit of children, rather than authors and publishers.)

Many educators and teachers have sought to improve the language arts by providing application for such in life-like activities. On the surface this theory sounds well, and many people are thereby misled. Much in the current "activity program" is of this nature. A more searching study, however, reveals that the primary objective is improvement in the language arts, through the use of "activities." This is a serious error. The primary objective *should* be improvement in the normal wholesome activities of children and youth. This means that our schools should have a curriculum strictly in terms of the activities which children, parents and communities wish to improve.

A recently published monograph¹ reports six years demonstration of this educational policy. The title of this study as given by the author was "Bilingual Children Acquire English Incidentally." This is a more appropriate title than the one used by the editor of the *Bulletin*. That monograph exhibits a curriculum

¹J. L. Meriam, *Learning English Incidentally: A Study of Bilingual Children*, Office of Education, Bulletin 1937, No. 15.

strictly in terms of the life activities of Mexican children. The conventional language arts as subjects do not appear. They have no place on the school program. But those pupils read more than in the conventional school, for the story room was supplied with several hundred carefully chosen story books—no duplicates. Those pupils wrote compositions—not as voluminous as in public schools, but for the normal purpose of expressing what they wished to say. Their writing and language and spelling were highly commendable in technic. It is a favorite

remark of mine that the best way to teach the language arts is not to teach them at all as such, but proceed vigorously to improve those activities in which these language arts function.

This life-like curriculum avoids the extremes of comedy and tragedy referred to above. It presents a true drama of child-to-youth life. The language arts, not as subjects, play generously their rôle as they normally function in human life. Here is a challenge to the student of child life and the one who wishes language to be a high art.

SHARING EXPERIENCES IN THE MODERN SCHOOL

(Continued from page 110)

It is too soon to evaluate the whole effect of the experience curriculum on the power of expression. Innumerable visits to classrooms would lead to the expectation of a golden age of literature. If this release of creative power does not result in the production of great literature it will surely mean more beauty in

the hearts of the people. He would be a pessimist, indeed, who would be unmoved by the sincerity, who would not be amazed at the fluency and beauty of speech on juvenile programs of spontaneous dramatic play, who could not find promise in the stories and poems that crowd the school anthologies.

Editorial

POOR RICHARD wisely said at the very beginning of the American Republic that "Experience keeps a dear school, but fools will learn in no other, and scarce in that." Americans have long quoted these words, recognizing their sagacity. How is it, then, that the modern school would convert the whole program of studies into an experience curriculum? Contributors to this issue of *The Review* give three excellent answers to this question.

Dr. James W. Evans, in his article on "Needed Research in Language, Composition, and Grammar," (page 98) points out the importance of cruciality in educational experiences. He implies here that the experience curriculum may be a dear school if class room situations are not made to contribute to education. He wisely challenges the situation in which cruciality remains unmeasurable, and suggests that it might be well worth while to set up artificially a series of situations of varying degrees of cruciality, and to measure the quality of pupil performance in each. Such experimentation might contribute to a better understanding of the problem.

The question must be asked over and over again, but how worth while are the pupil performances motivated by specific situations or experiences. Do the experiences represent the blundering, costly type of schooling that Poor Richard decried, or something on a higher educational level?

This question can be answered more simply by selecting situations that, in the very nature of things, lead into highly instructional activities. Scientific experimentation is not then required to determine the value of the activities; the answer is found simply in good teaching. Such is the activity described (page 93) by Harry A. Tate in his account of "A

Class Project in Letter Writing." In this project, the cumulative effects of the intensely social experience of writing letters are utilized educationally. An interest was built up that extended from class to class within the school, and from school to school in other cities, states, and countries. Here the educational nature of the experience is apparent, and deeply rooted in the urges of social communication.

Common sense enables the discerning teacher to choose for major activities in English those that relate form and content, performance and experience, in some such reciprocal way as is illustrated in this socialized correspondence. It is only too common, however, for English activities in the experience curriculum to lose the perspective that gives them educational significance. Experience then keeps indeed a costly school.

Thoughtful reading reveals that Miss Helen Heffernan ("Sharing Experiences in the Modern School," page 107) has the basic philosophy to see experience in the clear light of educational worth. She recognizes the qualities in experience that are educationally valuable. The teacher, she says, "arranges situations in which the child wants to express himself." She asks that the curriculum units provide an integrating center for experience, and in turn, that this integration provide for development in power of expression.

These three contributors then, make it clear that while experience may be utilized to the ends of education, and built into the curriculum, there is always the danger that non-educational activities may arise through uncontrolled situations or unwisely chosen ones, to defeat the aims of our schools. They offer three ways in which experience may be tested for educational value, namely, experimentation, recognition of intrinsic worth, and the application of sound educational principles.

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